

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESS STORIES ON SACLANT CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR SOUTH
ATLANTIC

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MALCOLM RUTHERFORD DATED IN BRUSSELS
FEB 4 APPEARED IN LONDON FINANCIAL TIMES OF FEB 5 UNDER CAPTION
"FEAR OF RUSSIAN BASES ON ANGOLA COAST--NATO NAVAL TASK FORCE
AS COUNTER
TO SOVIET THREAT." BEGIN TEXT.

NATO HAS DEVELOPED A CONTINGENCY PLAN TO COUNTER SOVIET NAVAL
INTERFERENCE WITH SHIPPING OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL NORTH
ATLANTIC TREATY AREA, INCLUDING THE SOUTH ATLANTIC OFF
ANGOLA, SOURCES REVEALED HERE TO-DAY.

THE PLANS INCLUDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SMALL NATO TASK FORCE
COMPOSED OF ONE LARGE COMMAND SHIP, THREE OR FOUR FRIGATES,
A SUBMARINE AND A FEW SUPPORT SHIPS COMING FROM THE NATO
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COUNTRIES CAPABLE OF CONTRIBUTING.

ALTHOUGH NATO FORCES INSIST THAT THE PLANS WERE PREPARED
BEFORE THE RECENT EVENTS IN ANGOLA. THE READINESS TO TALK

ABOUT THEM NOW IS CLEARLY RELATED TO THE ANGOLAN SITUATION AND TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE RUSSIANS WILL SET UP NAVAL BASES ALONG THE ANGOLAN COAST.

MILITARILY THE PLANS, IF IMPLEMENTED, WOULD BE DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT ANY SOVIET INTERFERENCE WITH WESTERN SHIPPING WOULD BE SEEN AS AN ATTACK ON THE ALLIANCE AS A WHOLE, EVEN IF IT TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE THE FORMAL TREATY AREA.

THE FORCE WOULD BE PREPARED TO ENTER ANY AREA WHERE THE RUSSIANS THREATENED TROUBLE EVEN IF THE SOVIET ACTION FELL WELL SHORT OF OPEN HOSTILITY. ONE SUGGESTION IS THE PLANS COULD GO INTO ACTION IF THE RUSSIANS SIMPLY DECLARED THAT PART OF A TRIDITIONAL TRADE ROUTE SHOULD BE CLOSED TO SHIPPING TO ALLOW FOR NAVAL EXERCISES.

THE PURPOSE WOULD BE TO DEMONSTRATE THE NATO READINESS TO USE FORCE IF NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS AND TO REEMPHASISE THE PRINCIPLE THAT AN ATTACK ON ONE NATO MEMBER WOULD BE REGARDED AS AN ATTACK ON ALL.

THE INITIAL PLANS WERE PRODUCED -- WITH THE BLESSING OF THE NATO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS -- IN THE EARLY 1970S WHEN THE EMERGENCY OF A SOVIET HIGH SEAS FLEET FIRST BECAME A SERIOUS FACTOR IN NATO'S STRATEGIC THINKING, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN REFINED SEVERAL TIMES SINCE.

THEIR POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN THE FACT THAT MINISTERS FROM NATO COUNTRIES HAVE CONSISTENTLY DENIED THAT THE ALLIANCE WAS CONSIDERING, EVEN ON PAPER, ANY ACTION SOUTH OF THE TROPIC OF CANCER, THE GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITATION LAID DOWN IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY OF 1949.

THE STRONGEST OBJECTIONS TO WIDENING THE ALLIANCE'S AREA OF ACTIVITIES HAVE COME FROM THE DUTCH AND THE DANES AND TO SOME EXTENT THE BRITISH LABOUR GOVERNMENT. BUT IN NO CASE HAS THERE BEEN ANY OBJECTION TO CONTINGENCY PLANNING OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

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KIND NOW WELL UNDER WAY, PROVIDED THAT OUTSIDE NATIONS SUCH AS SOUTH AFRICA ARE NOT INVOLVED.

THE BELIEF IN NATO HEADQUARTERS IS THAT THE PLANS COULD BE ADOPTED WITHOUT ANY CHANGE IN THE ORIGINAL TREATY AND HAVE BECOME AN ESSENTIAL PART OF DETERRENCE.
END TEXT.

2. SEPARATE TELEGRAM FOLLOWS WITH MISSION COMMENTS. STREATOR

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